

**Bethany Church, United Church of Christ  
Randolph, Vermont**

**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

Article I - Name

1. The name of this church is Bethany Church, United Church of Christ, located in the town of Randolph, County of Orange, State of Vermont.

Article II - Purpose

1. The avowed purpose of this church is to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate the Sacraments; to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal; to render loving service toward all people; and in accordance with the gospel to strive for righteousness, justice, and peace.

Article III - Covenant

1. The Covenant by which this Church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts, is as follows:

We covenant with the Lord and with one another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in God's holy ways.

We will strive to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only; to be firm in faith, quickened in hope, and constant in charity.

And we will consecrate our time, talent, substance, and influence, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Amen.

Article IV - Faith

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is shown to us in Jesus Christ, and to whose deeds we testify: God calls the worlds into being, creates us in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death. God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. God judges us and nations with a righteous will declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, God has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator. God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races. God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of humanity, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join Christ in his passion and victory. God promises to all who trust the divine power forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the gift of the Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that Kingdom which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power, be unto God.

## Article V - Polity

1. Polity. We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul and the right of private judgment. We hold to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control. We cherish the covenantal fellowship of the churches, united in district, state, and national bodies, for counsel and cooperation in matters of common concern.
2. The Wider Fellowship. While affirming the liberty of our churches, and the validity of our ministry, we hold to the unity and catholicity of the Church of Christ, and will unite with all its branches in hearty cooperation; and will earnestly seek, so far as in us lies, that the prayer of our Lord for his disciples may be answered, "That they all may be one."

## Article VI - Membership

1. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has been baptized, and has been confirmed, or has made public confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Membership is open to all without regard to race or color.
2. Members shall pledge themselves to attend the regular worship of the church and the celebration of the Lord's Supper; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the church; to contribute to its support and benevolence; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.
3. Associate members shall be those members of another church who are active in this church, but who wish to retain their membership in the other church. They shall have all of the rights and privileges of regular members.
4. Any member may, on his/her own request, be granted a letter of transfer. If wishing to join a body not in fellowship with this church, he/she may be dismissed with a certificate of church membership.
5. The Diaconate shall annually review the membership list with two purposes in mind. The first shall be to attempt reconciliation with lapsed memberships. The second shall be in the case of a member who has not, throughout the preceding five years, had any contact with the Church by attendance, support or communication, as far as can be ascertained. The Diaconate shall carefully investigate the member's circumstances and attempt to determine his/her desires regarding membership. If the investigation reveals that the member so desires, the Diaconate may retire the member to an inactive status. Should conditions later change, the Diaconate may return the member to active status.

## Article VII - Officers

The officers of the church, who shall be members, shall be a Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Receiver of Offerings, and Assistant Receiver of Offerings. They are to be elected each year for a term of one year and until a successor is elected.

1. The Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the church and of the Council, being chairperson of the latter. The Moderator shall have a tie-breaking vote.

2. The Clerk shall be responsible for keeping a complete record of all the affairs of the church--including membership, baptisms, marriages, deaths, etc.--and of the transactions of all meetings of the church. The Clerk shall also notify all officers, members of committees, and delegates of their election or appointment, and shall issue letters of transfer and recommendations. The Clerk shall bring to the notice of the church all communications intended for the church. When not otherwise provided, conduct all of its official correspondence. The Clerk shall preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give legal notice of all meetings of the church, and perform all other duties that usually pertain to the secretaries of assemblies. Any of these duties may be delegated to the church secretary.

3. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer shall be bonded and shall receive and disburse all monies as directed by the appropriate officials of the church. The Treasurer shall keep a complete record thereof and report monthly to the Council, Board of Trustees, and to the Annual Meeting. The books shall be audited annually. The Treasurer shall be an ex-officio member of the Investment Committee.

4. The Receiver of Offerings or Assistant Receiver of Offerings shall receive and record all funds for general expenses, missions, or any other purpose; shall keep a weekly record of payments on pledges, and shall acknowledge the receipt of special gifts or bequests as they arrive; shall deposit said funds in the proper bank accounts and deliver the bank receipts to the Treasurer, also notifying the chairperson of any committee concerned with the disposition of special funds received; shall issue year-end statements to all known donors; and shall report at the annual meeting.

#### Article VIII - Governing Boards

The Governing Boards shall be:

1. The Board of Deacons shall consist of sixteen members, one-quarter of each to be elected at each Annual Meeting for a four-year term. It shall be their duty, together with the Pastor, to minister to the spiritual affairs of the church, to take an active interest in the sick and needy, to secure supply ministers as necessary, and to provide for the administration of the Lord's Supper. The Board of Deacons shall be responsible for all matters involved in the worship service, and the Memorial Fund. The Board of Deacons shall administer a Deacon's Fund maintained mainly by loose offerings contributed at each Lord's Supper. They shall supervise the Music Committee and perform an annual Pastoral Review with a contract review. They shall be responsible for the use of the Encouragement Trust Fund. They shall review membership lists as provided in Article VI, Section 5.

2. The Board of Trustees shall consist of eight members, two to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve for a term of four years. The Trustees shall have charge of all real estate and tangible property of the church and see that it is kept in proper repair and condition. They shall not have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer property except by vote of the church authorizing the same. They shall have the authority to grant permission to use the church property subject to regulations established by the Council. They shall appoint and supervise the church sexton and church secretary, subject to review and approval of the Church Council.

3. The Board of Stewards shall consist of eight members, two to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve for a term of four years. The Stewards, with such assistance as they may call upon, shall be responsible for the stewardship education of the church, and shall conduct the annual stewardship drive for the church, submitting reports to appropriate boards and committees.
4. The Board of Christian Education shall consist of eight members, two to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve for a term of four years. It shall be the duty of the Committee to plan and carry into effect an adequate program of Christian education in the church and the church school. It shall be responsible for the appointment of the church school superintendent or professional educator, subject to review and approval by the Pastor and Church Council.
5. The Board of Mission shall consist of eight members, two to be elected at each Annual Meeting to serve for a term of four years. The Committee's aim is to encourage the outreach of the church in its mission to extend Christ's love and service to all people. The Committee shall encourage creative study and constructive action in the mission of the church, including education, development and implementation of new ventures as well as the encouragement and strength of present ones. The Committee shall also provide opportunities for local Christians to reflect on their response to social issues. The Mission Committee shares in the responsibility for evangelism, inviting others to join in the life and work of the Church of Christ.
6. No member may serve on more than one governing board concurrently. After serving two consecutive full terms, a board member will not be eligible for re-election to the same board until he/she has been out of office for one year.

#### Article IX - Permanent Committees

1. The Music Committee shall consist of the Choir Director, Organist, Pastor, at least one choir member, two Deacons and two members at large, as appointed by the Diaconate annually. The Committee shall meet at least quarterly and shall review the musical needs of the church, arrange for instrumentalists as needed, and arrange for special music at times when there is no choir. Deacons on the committee will provide support for the Choir Directors and the Organist by meeting with them individually twice a year.
2. The Encouragement Trust Committee shall consist of the Pastor and three members appointed by the Diaconate annually. The Committee shall review the spiritual needs of the church community and explore ways to encourage the spiritual growth of individual members, personally. Funds shall be made available to "encourage one another day after day" (Hebrews 3:13), utilizing special times for prayer, praise, meditation, teaching and renewal and support groups, all aimed at faith building and renewal of the spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of life. The Committee shall design a general plan for use of the anticipated Fund income ("Current Income"), which may include specific uses or more general types of uses. The Encouragement Trust Committee shall issue a written report and request for funds, with supporting documentation as needed, to the Diaconate, who shall determine the manner of funding. At any time during the year, the Encouragement Trust Committee may determine specific uses which fit in with the general plan. The Encouragement Trust Committee may also amend the general plan upon the approval of the Diaconate. It is intended that the Encouragement Committee and the process it follows be flexible to meet changing needs but the process be structured so that the

uses made of the Current Income are thoughtful and in keeping with the purposes hereof. Neither income nor principal may be used for operating expenses nor for "bricks and mortar." Income not used in any year shall be accumulated for future use to be used as "Current Use" in a subsequent year or as "Accumulated Income."

In addition, as part of the general plan, the Encouragement Committee shall assign a tithe, ten (10%) percent or more of the annual income, to be given to others in need outside Bethany Church as determined by the Encouragement Committee and approved by the Diaconate.

3. The Investment Committee shall consist of five voting members appointed by the Council, to serve terms of four years. (During the first year one will be elected for a one year term, two will be elected for two year terms and two will be elected for four year terms.) The Treasurer will be an ex-officio member of the committee. The Committee shall be responsible for the Investments of the church, including those of the Encouragement Trust, in accordance with policies as established and approved by the membership.

#### Article X. Church Council

1. The Church Council shall consist of the Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, two representatives of each of the five boards, and two representatives from the church at large. The representatives of the boards shall be elected at their first meeting following the annual meeting. The members at large shall be elected at the Annual Meeting.

2. At each meeting of the Council there should be a quorum of six members to vote on all business.

3. The Church Council shall annually appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of three members-at-large and three Council members to make nominations of officers, Board members, and Vermont Conference and Windsor-Orange Association delegates for the coming year.

4. The Church Council, at an early meeting, shall appoint an auditor for the ensuing year.

5. The Church Council shall be the policy-making body of the church between meetings of the members and shall coordinate, promote, and evaluate the entire program of the church. The decision of any governing board or committee may be reviewed and amended or set aside.

6. The Church Council shall be responsible for the designation of a Pastoral Search Committee when the need arises.

7. It shall be the responsibility of the Council to fill any vacancies until the next regular meeting of the church.

8. A Budget Committee composed of the Board of Trustees, Board of Stewards, and the Treasurer shall annually prepare a budget and present it to the Church Council for its approval prior to a vote of the membership.

## Article XI - Pastor

1. The Pastor shall be responsible for the spiritual welfare of the church with the assistance of the several boards. The Pastor shall seek to enlist followers of Christ, preach the gospel, and administer the Sacraments, shall have under his/her care all services of public worship, and assist all boards and committees in administering the activities of the church. The Pastor may preside at meetings of the church, in the absence of the Moderator, except when matters concerning the Pastor are considered or when another moderator is chosen. The Pastor shall be ex-officio an advisory member of all boards and committees. Accountability shall be to the church generally and to the Diaconate specifically.
2. When a vacancy occurs in the pastorate, the Church Council shall appoint a Pastoral Search Committee which, after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall, with the cooperation of the Minister of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, and others, make a canvass of available ministers, settle upon the one who in their judgment should be called to the pastorate, introduce the candidate to the church, and at a duly called meeting propose the candidate's election.
3. The Pastor shall be called for an indefinite time by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting. In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated.
4. The candidate's written affirmative response to the call shall constitute acceptance. The association to which the church belongs shall be invited to sit as an ecclesiastical council for the purpose of installing (and if necessary ordaining) the pastor in accordance with established practice. The Pastor shall become a member of the church at the first opportunity.
5. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship, sixty days notice shall be given by either party. In the case of loss of ministerial standing on the part of the Pastor, relations shall cease at once.
6. The church may at its discretion choose an Associate or Assistant Pastor(s).

## Article XII - Meetings

1. The Annual Meeting shall be held in the month of February, and warning shall be given at least two weeks in advance. At this meeting the annual reports of the officers and board and chair-people shall be presented, officers and board members elected, and such other business transacted as may be specified in the call or authorized in the By-Laws. All reports made at the annual meeting shall be in writing and for the preceding calendar year.
2. Special meetings shall be called upon request of the Pastor or of the Council or on the written application of any five members. The notice of the special meeting, and the object thereof, shall be warned at least two weeks in advance of the day fixed for such meeting.

## Article XIII - Quorum

No vote of the church shall be valid unless a quorum is present, and thirty members present at any duly called meeting shall constitute a quorum.

#### Article XIV - Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended at any duly called meeting by a majority vote of all members present, the proposed amendments having been submitted in writing to the Clerk and circulated among the members of the church at least two weeks before being voted upon.

#### Article XV - Property

1. The church may in its corporate name sue or be sued, may acquire by purchase, gift, devise, or bequest; may own, hold, invest, reinvest or dispose of property both real and personal for such work as the church may undertake and may purchase, own, receive, hold, manage, care for and transfer, rent, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber, sell, assign, transfer and convey such property for the general purposes of the church; it may receive and hold in trust both real and personal property and invest and reinvest the same and make any contracts for promoting the objects and purposes of the church.

2. Upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interests of which it shall then be possessed, including any devise, bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.

#### Article XVI - Repeal

The foregoing Constitution and By-Laws replace and supersede any constitution or by-laws heretofore adopted by Bethany Church.

Notes: Bethany Church was incorporated November 24, 1905.

This Constitution and By-Laws was (were) presented to the church membership November 19, 1967, and duly adopted at the Annual Meeting on January 10, 1968.

Amended 9/22/74 and 1/22/90 and 1/31/98 and 1/28/2006.

#### Article XVII – Endowment

A Bethany Endowment Fund for Bethany Church, United Church of Christ, was established by Congregational approval on January 28, 2006. The purpose, governance and operational procedures for the Bethany Endowment Fund are defined by a special resolution entitled “Resolution and Declaration of Endowment” as adopted by the Congregation on January 28, 2006.

Amended 1/28/2006

Amended 2/10/2007